

# NORTH 40

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is meant to pick a bidder, "who will be a good neighbor to all of us," Hammond said in his Sept. 10 letter. Their timeline for picking that bidder, he said, is by the end of this year; well after the late October beginning of the Special Town Meeting that town officials hoped would allow them to move ahead with a potential purchase of the land.

"I think the town is gearing up to work fast and furiously," town Deputy Director Meghan Jop told the Townsman Tuesday of the time remaining before Town Meeting begins during the last week of October. If a bid is put into place and accepted ahead of Town Meeting, officials would have to work quickly to bring that figure to Advisory Committee and educate Town Meeting members, she added.

"If we don't have an agreement, that article won't be in front of Town Meeting," she said. "There's certainly no guarantee that the town is

going to acquire the property." College officials plan to host community members at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 18, to brief them on the results of studies that have been done on the land, which in the 1950s served as a town landfill.

"...We intend to continue to engage in positive discussions with Wellesley town officials about this parcel and to be responsive to the town's stated interest in the future use of the North 40," Hammond said.

Despite the college's slower-than-expected process, the town has continued its work laying out potential uses for the land should it ultimately purchase the property. According to McCauley, the college has made some of its due diligence available to the town, including the revelation that the former landfill is smaller than originally thought but also deeper than anyone realized.

Members of the steering committee focused Tuesday on recapping the recent public visioning workshops,

which have yielded opinions that favor using the North 40 for playing fields and open space along with some support for limited housing development.

"In both [Sunday visioning] sessions there was a conviction that the town should buy the land," Steering Committee member Heidi Gross said this week. "What we do with it is a decision that will have to [be made] eventually."

Town officials are continuing work on a draft report to the town that will include recommendations for use of the land should the town buy it, as well as potential tax impacts should the area be developed into new homes. Ongoing consultant work, including a traffic study of Weston Road being conducted this week, will be included in that report, Jop said at the committee meeting Tuesday. In the meantime, Jop said later Tuesday, the Board of Selectmen continues to have conversations with the college and is awaiting its own appraisal of the property.

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# FORUM

QUESTIONS? Contact Editor Cathy Brauner at 781-4

## EDITORIALS

### It's the college's call

**A**s Wellesley residents contemplate the future of the North 40 – the 46-acre parcel of undeveloped Wellesley College-owned land that's going on the market – it's clear that we need to remember that Wellesley College is still considering its options, both in terms of buyers and a potential sale date.

The college is in the process of reworking its campus. The project outlined on page C1 of today's Townsman – the renovation of the aging field house – is an early example of this. That's going to take big bucks, including the money raised by the sale of the North 40.

So while many Wellesley citizens may be assuming that the college's North 40 will become the Town of Wellesley's North 40,

the interests of the town would best be served by the purchase of the North 40 by a conservation group and the development of the former St. James property for recreation purposes.

While it's unknown whether any conservation group has the interest or the resources at this point, the town would benefit in a couple of ways were one to appear on the horizon. First, it would be able to put more of its own financial resources toward the St. James site and the senior center. Second, and equally important, it could avoid loading Weston Road and the Woodlands neighborhood with more traffic. After all, if a developer puts in the winning bid, it's at least possible that the land could be converted for housing,

NORTH 40

## Town, college plans don't mesh

By Jordan Mayblum  
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As a Special Town Meeting largely geared toward addressing the North 40 property edges closer, town officials are continuing to develop plans for the site despite a lack of balance between the timelines of the town and Wellesley College.

"We're very disappointed with the process (of) the college," said Don McCauley, chairman of the North 40 Steering Committee. "We sort of premised this process based on having the parameters of an understanding with the college by this time."

According to members of the Steering Committee, there is frustration—but not necessarily surprise—that the college has not yet named a price for the 46-plus acres of land across Central Street from its campus. The college first began the process to sell the land this past spring when it sought, and received, permission from the Supreme Judicial Court to be freed from an easement on the land left by the college's founder.

Ben Hammond, Wellesley College's Vice President for Finance and Administration, said in a letter to community members that the college will seek to identify a list of bidders for the land that includes developers, conservation organizations and the town. Hammond said when the process began that the town would not have a right of first refusal for the property.

The request for proposals

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